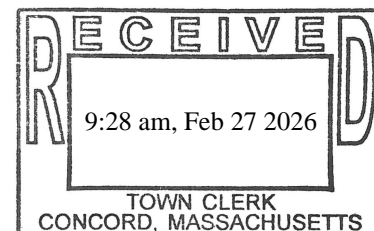


**BIAS AND HATE INCIDENT REPORTING WORK GROUP
MINUTES**

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

6:30 p.m.

55 Church Street & Zoom Video Conference



Attendees: Sandeep Pisharody, Daniel Hart, Debbie Dorfman, Agnes Lubega-Kalisa, Paul Boehm, Jessica Porter, Kerry Lafleur (online)

1. Call to Order: 6:32

2. Public Comments

No public comments at this time

3. Approval of Available Minutes

Mr. Pisharody motioned to approve the minutes of February 3, 2026

Ms. Dorfman seconded

All in favor: Mr. Pisharody, Mr. Hart, Ms. Dorfman, Ms. Lubega-Kalisa and Mr. Boehm

4. Discuss Top 5-10 specific Learnings from Phase 1 Briefings

The group had several briefings in the past 3 months (Town Counsel, Concord Safe, Concord Police, Carlos Hoyt Jr, Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council). They discussed and reflected on what they have learned. They revisited holding a possible public forum and the members agree there is value in hosting one, but timing is still to be determined. Unlike focus groups, a public forum would be larger and less interactive, better suited for presenting a draft proposal and gathering broader feedback rather than collecting initial input.

The group held one focus group on January 13, 2026 and reflected on the value of the focus groups, that it provided meaningful insights. Key themes emerging from recent briefings and discussions include usability, trust, anonymity, legal constraints, and system coordination. The second focus group is Thursday, February 5, 2026 at the Goodwin Forum.

Ms. Rosenfeld suggested to hold a separate focus group for young people to gather their perspectives. The importance of acting on reports to maintain community trust was emphasized as a key takeaway.

The group also specifically discussed public reaction to DA Ryan's comments about incident reports from Concord and clarified confusion about where reports originated. While reports were said to be "from Concord," most were filed by Concord Police as part of standard protocol after receiving complaints from individuals. The schools report incidents to the police, and the police then report to the DA's office—so the DA's statement was technically accurate, but the process created confusion about the true source of reports. Members agreed the situation highlights broader issues like limited visibility into how school, police, and DA systems connect, agree that there is a need for better coordination between the town and schools, while respecting confidentiality laws like Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

There was also concern about public perception—whether Concord has more incidents or simply stronger reporting. Members cautioned against speculation or comparisons without clear data and reinforced the need for the town to design a clear, coordinated reporting system that builds trust, ensures follow-through, and avoids confusion.

5. Review Work Plan

The group is transitioning into designing the reporting system and they plan to address foundational questions such as:

- What qualifies as an incident?
- Who can report?
- How should reporting occur?
- What barriers might exist?

The goal is to develop a draft design, likely by the end of the first quarter, and then present it publicly for feedback before finalizing. The immediate focus is defining what constitutes an incident and reflecting on insights gathered from prior briefings and focus groups.

The group engaged in a thorough discussion about building a coordinated, town-wide reporting system, with trust emerging as the central theme. Members emphasized that requiring names can discourage reporting—particularly among vulnerable communities such as immigrants—and that fear of identification remains a significant barrier. While legal constraints such as public records laws, mandatory reporting requirements, criminal thresholds, and civil discovery rules may complicate promises of anonymity, the group agreed not to eliminate anonymous reporting without first seeking clearer legal guidance, potentially from Town Counsel. They also discussed creating a multifaceted system—offering phone, email, online, in-person, and mail options—to promote accessibility and equity.

Legal and operational realities were key considerations. Mandatory reporting laws, potential criminal implications, and public records requirements create complexity, and strong coordination between the town, police, schools, and possibly community organizations will be essential. Members stressed the importance of avoiding duplication, reducing confusion, and preventing individuals from having to repeatedly retell traumatic experiences as reports move between entities. While Concord PD and the DA's office already contribute to a statewide reporting portal, current data likely underrepresents incidents, and Concord lacks a comprehensive town-wide mechanism. Although funding and staffing needs are real concerns, the group agreed not to limit the system's design prematurely. Overall, the shared direction is to develop a trusted, coordinated reporting system that encourages honest reporting, strengthens partnerships, and addresses underreporting while legal and operational details continue to be refined.

Mr. Boehm introduced the concept of an “incident life cycle” to frame the reporting system as part of a larger ecosystem rather than just a data tool. The proposed cycle includes:

1. A harm-doer and an incident
2. Reporting (victim or bystander)
3. Immediate response and support for the victim
4. Data capture
5. Incident analysis and trend review
6. Town-level response
7. Community action and education
8. Long-term reduction of harm

He emphasized that the group's work (the reporting mechanism) is only one part of this broader system. The most important immediate step after an incident should be supporting the victim, not just collecting data.

The group emphasized that transparency and public accountability must be central to the reporting system. Data trends should be shared publicly, along with visible updates—potentially on an annual basis—about how the Town is responding. Members noted that an initial increase in reports may reflect growing trust in the system rather than an increase in harm, and that a well-functioning reporting channel could reduce the need for individuals to raise concerns in public meetings by providing a more appropriate pathway. The system's life cycle should include clear referral pathways to police, the DA, or other relevant agencies, ensuring it operates as part of a coordinated network rather than in isolation.

Victim support was identified as a top priority. Members agreed that meaningful response—not just a callback—should define success, with metrics such as whether a response was provided, the timeliness of that response, satisfaction with the outcome (potentially measured through surveys), and whether support was offered or requested. Providing this level of care and follow-through will require staffing or clearly assigned responsibility, similar to the role Human Rights Commissions play in other communities. Overall, the group affirmed that the system must prioritize victim support, contribute to broader community education and action, generate reliable trend data, and build trust through transparency and responsiveness.

6. Begin Phase 2 Discussions - Definition and Categorization of “Incidents”

Mr. Boehm shifted the conversation to defining “What is an incident?” as part of building the reporting system. He proposed that an incident can be categorized using three core components:

1. Where it occurred (location/category of setting)
2. The basis of the bias (race, religion, gender, etc.)
3. The type of incident (verbal, physical, vandalism, discrimination, etc.)

The group also discussed intake categories that would be good to add in the form.

They started with how to categorize “where incidents” (location) happen without requiring overly specific addresses.

Examples included:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Law enforcement
- Public accommodations
- Public spaces

The group raised important questions about jurisdictional boundaries between schools and the town, including how to handle incidents that occur at school-sponsored events off-site, on school buses versus at bus stops, and whether both school and town systems could receive reports. Members agreed that the town should offer its own reporting option even if schools maintain a separate system, underscoring the need for clear coordination to avoid confusion or gaps. They also emphasized that reporting categories should remain simple yet flexible, including an “Other” option, and acknowledged that further refinement—particularly around location categories—is needed.

The group compared bias categories from Boston College and Georgetown and discussed expanding the list.

Additional categories suggested:

- Immigration status
- Language/accents
- Pregnancy
- Parental status
- Veteran status
- Marital status
- Housing status (houselessness)
- Ex-offender status

It was agreed that the reporting categories should be broad, allow for multiple selections to reflect intersectionality, and always include an “Other” option, recognizing that no list will ever be perfect but that inclusivity must remain the priority. They also discussed how to define the threshold for bias—whether it should be based on discomfort, harm, demeaning behavior, or the targeting of an intrinsic or perceived characteristic. Ultimately, the group leaned toward allowing individuals to define their experience of harm subjectively rather than imposing a narrow or rigid definition.

Examples discussed for the type of Incidents were:

- Physical assault
- Verbal harassment
- Written harassment
- Vandalism/property damage
- Online/social media
- Non-verbal gestures
- Intimidation

The group raised the importance of carefully structuring report categories, noting that certain terms such as “assault” and “discrimination” carry specific legal definitions. They agreed that reports should allow multiple category selections and include an “Other” checkbox to support inclusive data coding. A narrative description box was considered essential, as structured categories support data analysis while free-text responses provide critical context and detail. Broadly, members agreed that an incident report should help answer the key questions—Who, What, Where, When, and How—while balancing simplicity with meaningful data capture. The goal is not to perfectly define harm, but to create a system that enables individuals to report when they feel targeted based on a protected or intrinsic characteristic. The group believes most key elements have been identified and will continue refining categories, with the next meeting focusing on who reports, who receives reports, reporting mechanisms, and barriers to reporting.

Overall, this discussion moved the group from abstract planning into concrete design decisions about how incidents will be defined and captured in the reporting system.

The group also discussed the possibility of holding a third focus group specifically for youth to gather feedback on the proposed reporting system, with consensus leaning toward middle and high school students (grades 6–12), as elementary students were considered too young. Members emphasized the need for clear age parameters and formal parental consent, agreeing that outreach must go through parents and school leadership to avoid missteps or public controversy.

Both Mr. Pisharody and Mr. Williams suggested that coordinating outreach should be through the school administration, the DEI/DEIB Director, the Superintendent, PTGs, school communication channels like their newsletters, and *The Concord Bridge*, as well as potentially leveraging existing youth-focused events.

The discussion was tabled for further consideration, with Mr. Boehm planning to explore best practices and members reflecting on how to engage the youth without duplicating school efforts. The group expressed strong interest in youth input but agreed to proceed thoughtfully with clear consent, coordination, and communication.

Additional considerations included an upcoming public forum at the library and the possibility of offering a third adult session, an all-ages session, or a virtual option to improve accessibility during winter months. Overall,

Ms. Lubega-Kalisa was tasked to come up with the correct language for use for “area of incident”

Mr. Pisharody will develop a comprehensive list of bias categories by synthesizing examples from Georgetown and Boston College and will share his compiled “brain dump” documents with the committee via email for review.

7. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Ms. Begley to send a doodle poll on next meeting dates before the quarter concluded.

8. Adjournment: 8:11pm

Respectfully submitted:
Magnolia Begley, HS Generalist